



Registered Charity No. 1070744

**FRIENDS OF
RODLEY
NATURE RESERVE
NEWSLETTER
Spring 2026**



Tree creeper

Photograph by Danni Burgess

A Glimpse into the Life of Kingfishers



Photograph by Chris Tordoff

By the water's edge, the Kingfisher's flash of blue and orange is a welcome sign of spring. But what goes on behind the scenes as these birds prepare for the breeding season?

Pairing Up and Courtship. Kingfishers begin to pair up from February, as the days lengthen and the waterways come alive. Males become more vocal, using high-pitched calls to attract females. Courtship is a captivating ritual: the male presents fish to the female, demonstrating his ability to provide and strengthening their bond.

Spotting the Difference. While both sexes are strikingly coloured, males have an all-black bill, whereas females have a reddish-orange base to the lower mandible. Both males and females have been spotted in recent weeks in and around the Duck Marsh and Lagoon areas, so there is a chance that breeding could occur in or around the Reserve this year.

Choosing the Perfect Nest Site. Kingfishers are meticulous nesters, favouring steep,

vertical banks near clean, shallow water. Both birds dig a tunnel—sometimes up to a metre long—into the bank, lining the chamber with fish bones. If natural sites are scarce, they may use artificial banks or tree roots.

The nesting bank built on an island in the Duck Marsh has yet to be utilised by the local Kingfishers, though they have in the past been sighted starting to build a tunnel in the nest bank at the back of the Lagoon, before the Sand Martins arrive and cause them to move elsewhere. The Kingfishers seen around the Reserve more than likely nest in the riverbank.

Egg Laying and Family Life. Egg laying usually starts in March or April, with the season stretching into July. Kingfishers often raise two or three broods per year, each clutch containing 5-7 eggs. Both parents share incubation, and chicks hatch after about three weeks, fledging three to four weeks later.



Photograph by Keith Holmes

Resilience and Recovery. Thanks to their adaptability and high reproductive rate, Kingfishers can recover quickly from harsh winters, ensuring their continued presence along the UK's waterways.

Simon Brown

Introducing Our New QR-Code Nature Posts

As you explore the Reserve over the coming months, you may notice something new appearing along the paths: a series of wooden posts topped with QR-code signs. These markers are part of a new project designed to help visitors discover more about the wildlife and habitats around them.

Each QR code links directly to a page on our website, giving you instant access to information

about the area where you're standing – whether that's the Dragonfly Ponds, the Sand Martin Bank, Tim's Field or one of our quieter woodland corners. With

a quick scan on your phone, you can learn about the species you're likely to see, the conservation work taking place, and the stories behind the landscape.

The signs have been created to be clear, friendly and easy to use, and they'll be placed at key points around the Reserve. Think of them as little gateways into the hidden life of Rodley: a way to turn a stroll into a deeper nature experience.

We hope these new posts will help visitors of all ages feel more connected to the Reserve and encourage everyone to pause, look a little closer, and discover something new.

David Booth



Watch Out for Weasels



Photograph by Peter Humphrey

Weasels are our smallest carnivore and belong to a group known as Mustelids which are animals with long bodies and short legs. The family includes its larger relative the Stoat, a mammal which can also be found at Rodley but much less frequently.

Weasels will eat voles, mice, and small birds and in 2024 there were two records of young Brown Rats being taken. While Weasels are fierce little predators they do themselves fall prey to other creatures, one of them perhaps surprisingly being Grey Herons.

With its daggerlike beak the Grey Heron is a highly adaptable predator with a varied diet which includes fish, amphibians and small mammals. They have been known to take prey as large as young rabbits and stoats. Here on the Reserve there have been two records of one catching a Weasel, both in 2021 - on 3rd November on the Scrubland and on 4th December in the Reedbed.

But you don't need to go far from the visitor centre to have a chance of seeing a Weasel. Over the years the road just outside the centre has produced numerous sightings.

Peter Murphy

Community Christmas Celebrations

In December we were delighted to be invited to join the very first Christmas Tree Festival that took place in St Thomas' Church in Stanningley on Saturday 6th December.

The event was organised by Rev. Lottie Jones who invited many local organisations and community groups to come together to celebrate Christmas. The trees were designed to represent each organisation in as creative a way as possible.

A small group of volunteers from the Nature Reserve willingly took on the challenge. It was decided that our tree should be made using natural materials in line with the reserve's ethos and to celebrate the beauty of the natural world.



The tree was constructed using willow whips grown on the reserve that had been soaked in water to make them pliable enough to weave into a framework. This was then adorned with ivy and wooden decorations. Even the star on the top of the tree was made using a whip of willow bent and twisted into shape. You may

have been lucky enough to see a duplicate tree on display in the Visitor Centre along with the other natural decorations our volunteers cleverly constructed.

At the church, all the trees were displayed along the aisles so that they created a magical indoor woodland walk, with each tree telling its own story about the people who had created them.

Lottie reported that the festival had been a great success with over 300 people attending and taking part. There were refreshments, crafts, stalls and performances from local school choirs to add to the festive fun.

Rachel Gander

Annual Review

Members of the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve are entitled to a free printed copy of the Annual Review as part of their membership. However, over the last couple of years less than 15% of members have requested one. This, together with the retirement of the current Review editor, has led us to decide to discontinue the printed version.

It is important that we continue to record what has been seen on the Reserve and make this information available. It is therefore proposed to publish the various recorders' reports on our website starting with the 2025 reports. We will make an announcement in the next Newsletter notifying members as to when the reports are available for viewing.

We are not alone in taking this action as many similar organisations are no longer producing printed annual reports, the large majority of people presumably preferring to read these on line these days.

The Big Garden Birdwatch

Did you know? The Big Garden Birdwatch is 47 this year! It was launched as a joint project between the RSPB's Young Ornithologists Club (now Wildlife Explorers) and the BBC's Blue Peter. It is the world's largest garden wildlife survey. Every year, hundreds of thousands of nature lovers like you take part, helping to build a picture of how garden birds are faring.

Why take part? The BGBW helps scientists understand how our garden birds are doing, but it's also a brilliant activity for children. It turns an ordinary hour into a mini wildlife adventure : Who can spot the most sparrows? Will a robin make an appearance? And can anyone tell the difference between a Blue Tit and a Great Tit?



You don't need to be an expert, just curiosity, a bit of patience, and maybe a warm drink! You'll be surprised by how many different birds show up once you start looking.

At Rodley we like to help inspire you to enjoy the nature that is on your doorstep. We aim to educate children and connect them to the outside world and remind them that even though we live near a city, nature is all around us, sometimes we just need to be reminded to look.

Joanne from the RSPB joined us and we had volunteers in The Manager's Garden Hide to help identify the birds. Saturday was cold, dry and sunny, and it was lovely to see grown-ups and children sharing sightings and swapping stories. Sunday however, was cold, very wet, and windy and the birds seemed to do what they always do on Big Garden Bird Watch weekend - they disappeared!

After counting the few birds that did show up for some much-needed food, children got stuck in with help from our volunteers, to make bird feeders to take home to hang up in their own gardens.

Thank you to everyone who came to support us. We always love to meet and talk to you and welcome new families who haven't visited us before. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

Denese Swann

Our next event



Aireborough Rotary Club

GRAND EASTER EGG HUNT

Rodley Nature Reserve
LS13 1HP



SUNDAY 5th APRIL

11:00am - 3:00pm

HONEY STALL
GAMES
TOMBOLA

FREE ENTRY
REFRESHMENTS

please bring cash for stalls

all online donations to local charities

book your time slot at:
www.ticketsource.co.uk/aireboroughrotary

No Dogs allowed on the Reserve except Assistance Dogs

 aireborotary Charity Number 507700 @AireboSecretary 

Build a Nest Box

National Nestbox Week is an established part of the ornithological calendar. Celebrated from February 14th each year, it puts the spotlight on breeding birds and asks everyone to put up more nest boxes in their local area.

Nest boxes play two important roles: in late winter they provide shelter from the weather, offering birds a safe place to roost, and as spring approaches they help birds prepare for the breeding season by providing nesting sites.



Changes to natural habitats mean that good nesting places are becoming harder to find. Nest boxes offer a simple but effective solution, giving wild birds in our gardens a secure home for raising their young.

To help our local birds, we invited children to come and build nest boxes with us from kits already pre-cut by our volunteers. There was lots of frantic hammering of nails into wood, (I hope Rodley's residents had their ear defenders handy!) With help from our very patient volunteers, sturdy nest boxes emerged from the chaos, and no one lost any fingers!

After the hammering mayhem, children then got messy making simple bird feeders to take home for the hungry birds. Very proud new nest box owners could be seen carrying them home with advice of where to position them, eagerly awaiting the birds to move in.

Denese Swann

Events Coordinator



Rodley Nature Reserve Events 2026

<p>SPRING BIRD WALK</p> 	<p>SUNDAY 3 MAY</p>	<p>A FAMILY WALK LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY BIRDS BY THEIR SONG</p>	<p>MEET AT THE MAIN CAR PARK (NEAR THE RIVER)</p>
<p>SUPERVISED POND</p>  <p>DIPPING</p>	<p>RESTARTS SUNDAY 24 MAY</p>	<p>COME AND SEE WHAT CREATURES LIVE IN OUR PONDS</p>	<p>PUBLIC DIPPING PONDS</p>
<p>NATURE QUEST DAY</p> 	<p>SATURDAY 1 AUGUST</p>	<p>A DAY FULL OF WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES FOR ALL THE FAMILY</p>	<p>VISITOR CENTRE AREA AND AROUND THE RESERVE</p>
<p>FUNGUS FORAY</p> 	<p>SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER</p>	<p>LEARN ABOUT THE FUNGI AT RODLEY</p>	<p>VISITOR CENTRE AREA AND AROUND THE RESERVE</p>
<p>HALLOWEEN</p> 	<p>SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER</p>	<p>COME IN FANCY DRESS AND ENJOY SOME HALLOWEEN FUN</p>	<p>VISITOR CENTRE AREA AND AROUND THE RESERVE</p>

Remember to check our website for Moth Trap Opening and Bat Night dates which will take place later in the year

<https://rodleynaturereserve.org/events/>

Supervised Pond Dipping

Could you spare a couple of hours to join our team of Pond Dipping Volunteers?

Pond Dipping is a very popular activity with local children so we always need a large team of volunteers to help them dip safely

If you are interested, and can spare a few hours on either a Wednesday, Saturday, or Sunday afternoon during the summer months, please get in touch

You don't need to be available every week and full training will be provided

For more information, please contact Rachel Gander at

events@rodleynaturereserve.org

Visit our website

<https://rodleynaturereserve.org/volunteering/>

or scan the QR Code



Reserve Opening Times

**Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday and most Bank Holidays: March to October – 9am to 5pm
November to February – 9am to 4pm**

The Visitor Centre is open March to October 10am until 4pm, November to February 10am until 3.30pm during Reserve opening hours.

Members of the public are only able to visit the Reserve on the above days/times

Telephone No. on open days 0113 2040441

For Rodley Nature Reserve Trust Matters:

Trust Secretary:

Peter Murphy

Email: info@rodleynaturereserve.org

Visitor Centre Volunteer Coordinator

Louise Staniland Email : lstaniland17@outlook.com

Friends Membership:

Christine Cooper Email: ducksbeek@hotmail.co.uk

78 Acres Hall Crescent, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 9DZ

Education Bookings:

Denese Swann

Email events@rodleynaturereserve.org

Events Coordinator:

Denese Swann

Email: events@rodleynaturereserve.org



RODLEY NATURE RESERVE

X @ RodleyNR

Website: www.rodleynaturereserve.org